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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Monday, June 19, 1944.

Subject: "CHERRIES FOR NEXT WINTER'S PIES." Information from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Cherries get ripe rather suddenly in the month of June, and if you're one of the homemakers who want a good supply for pies next winter you must work fast to beat the birds in getting them off the trees. So can some of the cherries, or freeze them, according to the equipment you have. You might even put up a few as sweet pickles. Cherries also happen to be one of the fruits that dry successfully, but it may not be worth your while to try to dry them. The home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture point out that a great deal of juice is pressed out of the cherries in preparing them for drying. If you save this juice, you would have to can it, and if you can the juice you might as well can the cherries in the first place.

Another disadvantage of drying cherries is that the sour cherries shrink a great deal and come out quite different from the original cherries, just as raisins are different from grapes. Sweet cherries do not lose as much juice as sour cherries when you crush them for drying, but they lose some. So the food preservation specialists say to can or freeze cherries in preference to other ways of saving them.

Let's begin with directions for canning cherries, as furnished by the canning specialists. You may can either the sour red pie cherries or the 'sweet cherries pitted or unpitted. If you pit them, save all the juice. Add one-half cup of sugar to each quart of sour cherries with their juice. Cover the pan, bring the cherries to a boil, and shake the pan so they won't stick. Pack the cherries hot in clean hot jars. Cover the fruit in the jar with boiling hot juice, leaving half

an inch head space for the food to expand. Process these precooked, hot-packed cherries 15 minutes in a boiling-water bath, counting the time from when the water in the canner comes to a rolling boil. You do sweet cherries in the same way. Many housewives like to can sweet cherries unpitted. If you do, add a small amount of water when you precook them, to keep them from sticking.

A few points next on freezing cherries. Be sure the cherries you choose for freezing all have an even color and are of the same degree of ripeness. They should be fully ripe, but firm---never soft--- and have a tender skin. As you pick the cherries, avoid filling the baskets too full. You don't want to crush the cherries on the bottom. As soon as you bring the cherries in, put them in a cold place. Plan to handle the cherries the same day, if possible.

You prepare both the sweet cherries and the bright red sour pie cherries the same way for freezing, except that you naturally use less sugar for sweet cherries. You can leave the pits in sweet cherries, but they tend to give the fruit a flavor like almonds, which you may not like.

Sort the cherries over, wash and drain them. Take the pits out of the sour cherries. This is sometimes easier to do if you soak the cherries a short time in cold water, but do not let them soak very long. After pitting, save the juice and freeze it for beverages. Unsugared sour cherries discolor in freezing, so it is better to add some sugar, according to the acidity of the cherries. If you intend to use the frozen cherries for pies or cobblers, pack about 5, 4, or 3 parts by weight of fruit with one part by weight of sugar. Mix the sugar well with the fruit. Pack immediately in moisture-vapor-proof containers or glass jars, and put in the locker as soon as possible.

If you want some sour cherries for making ice cream, pit them, crush the fruit, and use more sugar. Mix 2 or 3 parts of fruit by weight to one part of sugar.

Sour cherry juice with the same amount of sugar added makes a good base for punch and beverages or for sherbets. Coarsely crushed pitted sweet cherries go well over ice cream as a sauce or "sundae topping". Pack them with 3 parts of fruit by weight to one part of sugar. Freeze either the juice or the crushed fruit without delay to prevent discoloration.

An old-fashioned way of saving cherries is to pickle a few of them as a relish to serve with meat. To make pickled cherries, wash and pit large sour cherries, and add three-fourths of their weight of sugar. Sprinkle the sugar over the cherries in layers, and let stand overnight. In the morning stir until the sugar dissolves. Then press the juice from the cherries. Tie a small quantity of whole spices in a loose cheesecloth bag, drop the bag into the juice, and boil the juice down to about three-fourths of the original quantity. Use cinnamon, allspice and a few cloves for the spices. After boiling the sirup down, remove the spices, pour the hot sirup over the drained cherries, and add 2 tablespoons of vinegar to each pint. Seal and let stand about 2 weeks to blend before using.

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